

**Municipal Service Review
and
Sphere of Influence Recommendation**

**White Mountain Fire Protection District
Mono County, California**

February 2009



Prepared By:

**Mono County Local Agency Formation Commission
P.O. Box 347
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
(760) 924-1800 fax (760) 924-1801
commdev@mono.ca.gov**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary 1
Municipal Service Review Determinations 1
Sphere of Influence Findings 5
Sphere of Influence Recommendation 5
Reorganization Recommendation 5

I. Introduction 7
Municipal Service Reviews 7
Relationship Between Municipal Service Reviews and Spheres of Influence 7

II. White Mountain Fire Protection District 8
District Overview 8
Service Area 8
Population Characteristics 8
Housing Characteristics 11
Services Provided 11
ISO Rating 11
Land Ownership 11
Surrounding Fire Protection Facilities 12
Fire Hazard 12
Local Fire History 12
Planned Land Uses 12
Mono County Fire Safe Standards 14
Fire Safe Council 14
District Issues of Concern 14
District Planning 14
District Services 15
Fire Suppression and Emergency Medical Response 15
Mutual Aid and Service Agreements 15
Infrastructure and Facilities 17
Communications 18
Administration and Staffing 18
Service Activity 18
Funding and Budget 18

III. Service Review Analysis and Determinations 21
Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies 21
Growth and Population Projections for the Affected Area 23
Financing Constraints and Opportunities 26
Cost Avoidance Opportunities 27
Opportunities for Rate Restructuring 28
Opportunities for Shared Facilities 29
Government Structure Options 32

Evaluation of Management Efficiencies	33
Local Accountability and Governance.....	34
IV. Sphere of Influence Recommendation.....	36
Present and Planned Land Uses	36
Present and Probable Need for Public Facilities and Services	37
Present Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services	38
Social or Economic Communities of Interest	38
Sphere of Influence Recommendation.....	38
Reorganization Recommendation.....	38
V. References.....	40

FIGURES

Figure 1 White Mountain Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence	9
Figure 2 White Mountain Fire Protection District Boundaries—Withdrawn Lands.....	10
Figure 3 White Mountain Wildland Fire Hazard Areas.....	13

TABLES

Table 1: White Mountain Fire Protection District Services and Programs	17
Table 2: White Mountain Fire Protection District Call Log--2006	18
Table 3: White Mountain Fire Protection District Revenues and Expenditures, FY 2007-2008	20
Table 4A: Buildout Figures for Benton	23
Table 4B: Buildout Figures for Hammil Valley	24

SUMMARY

Municipal Service Review Determinations

1. Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

- The renovation or replacement of existing facilities will be needed to maintain or increase the quality of service provided by the district.
- Accelerated development will place more pressure on the WMFPD to augment its service capacities. Portions of the district may require new and increased infrastructure.
- The replacement of aging equipment and the purchase of additional equipment will be needed to maintain or increase the quality of service provided by the district.
- The district needs a long-term solution to the lack of sufficient volunteer personnel.
- Additional paved roadways could increase the quality of service provided by the district.
- The availability of a long-term reliable water supply directly impacts the district's ability to provide fire suppression services. The district's capacity to serve new development will be contingent on the development of a long-term dedicated water supply.

2. Growth and Population Projections for the Affected Area

- The Mono County General Plan Land Use Element allows for significant additional growth in the area served by the White Mountain FPD.
- Growth is anticipated to occur primarily in and adjacent to existing developed areas. Development on lands designated for agricultural uses would create new pockets of development away from currently developed areas.
- Visitors to the area will continue to increase demand for services such as emergency medical response and vehicular accident response while providing no commensurate increase in revenues available to provide those services. There is a need to have these users pay for their share of the services.
- The population in the area served by the White Mountain FPD is projected to increase to 619 by 2020 and 668 by 2030, creating an increased demand for fire and emergency medical services.
- The population will continue to age, creating an increased demand for emergency medical services.
- Policies in the **Tri-Valley Area Plan** in the **Mono County General Plan Land Use Element** require the county to allow additional residential subdivision in Benton only when adequate services, including fire protection services, are available or planned for development. New development and subdivisions must comply with fire safe regulations and obtain a will-serve letter from the White Mountain Fire Protection District. Subdivisions shall not be approved in areas that are withdrawn from or not within the White Mountain FPD until those areas are brought into the district.

3. Financing Constraints and Opportunities

- The WMFPD's future financing will continue to rely primarily on property tax revenues, fire mitigation fees and augmentation (in the form of aid from other governmental agencies and grants).

- The district's fire mitigation fee of 50 cents per square foot of new construction is one of the lower fees in the county, below the countywide average of 63 cents per square foot. An opportunity may exist to increase the fee.
- The adequacy of property tax revenues to fund local facilities and services has steadily declined over time.
- The district needs to annex the withdrawn lands to which it currently provides service.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain existing service levels as costs increase over time.
- There are opportunities to coordinate with other fire districts and agencies to increase efforts to secure grant funding.

4. Cost Avoidance Opportunities

- The Tri-Valley area is a discrete geographic area within Mono County with three distinct community areas—Benton, Hammil, and Chalfant.
- Although there are no overlapping district boundaries, there are overlapping service boundaries since both the Chalfant Valley Fire Department and the White Mountain FPD provide services to the Hammil Valley.
- There are no fire facilities or equipment in the Hammil Valley.
- The White Mountain FPD is a volunteer department with an elected board of commissioners—administrative costs are generally low.
- Although the district strives to keep operations and maintenance costs low by sharing services and training with other districts and by purchasing through associations in order to take advantage of lower prices or discounts, small districts tend to suffer from a lack of economies of scale.
- Cooperation among fire districts is an important part of reducing costs.
- The cost of volunteer training is unavoidable and may be lost when trained volunteers leave the district. A possibility exists for the district to offer benefit contracts so that a volunteer agrees to be with the district for a specific amount of time or to reimburse the district for training costs.
- Integrated planning, especially long range planning, is an important part of cost avoidance. The district is in the process of developing a long-range plan to address the demands imposed by growth within the district.
- The Chalfant Valley Fire Department and the White Mountain FPD are both small districts with limited physical and financial resources. The Chalfant Fire Department was originally a part of a larger White Mountain FPD. Due primarily to socio-economic distinctions, this area was detached from White Mountain FPD and the new Chalfant Valley Fire Department, which is a Community Services District, was formed in 1988. Both Benton and Chalfant are experiencing significant growth and there is a need throughout the Tri-Valley for expanded fire protection and emergency medical services.

5. Opportunities for Rate Restructuring

- All funding mechanisms have inherent limitations that may prevent their implementation, use or restructure.
- The district could benefit from increasing its fire mitigation fee from \$.50 per square foot.

- The White Mountain FPD should seek additional opportunities to reduce costs through cooperation and sharing with other agencies.
- The WMFPD should pursue grant funding.

6. Opportunities for Shared Facilities and Resources

- The largest impediment to greater sharing of resources and facilities in Mono County is geographic separation between fire protection districts.
- Fire districts in Mono County can share resources through joint training sessions, shared purchasing, and the implementation of mutual aid agreements.
- The **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan for Mono County** contains a number of mitigation measures to address fire hazard planning in the county's communities. While the focus of the plan is on mitigation planning for wildland fire hazards, the mitigation measures identified in the plan apply to all fire hazards in the area. Responsibility for implementing those fire hazard planning measures rests with the County, the Regional Planning Advisory Committees, and local fire protection districts.
- The Tri-Valley currently has no paramedic service. The remainder of the county, along the Highway 395 corridor, has paramedic service provided by Mono County. When paramedic services are provided for the Tri-Valley there is the opportunity to share resources and facilities with the fire protection districts in the area.

7. Government Structure Options

- In regions of the county with separate, distinct communities that are geographically remote from each other, public services are most logically provided by single purpose special districts rather than by a larger entity such as the county.
- In regions of the county that have abutting fire districts serving separate communities within the region, such as the Tri-Valley, an opportunity exists to merge the districts to create a regional fire district with facilities in each community.
- Although a larger fire district for the Tri-Valley could potentially reduce administrative costs, eliminate duplication of services in the Hammil Valley, and enjoy greater economies of scale than the smaller districts, past socio-economic distinctions have resulted in two distinct districts for the Tri-Valley. If these socio-economic distinctions change in the future, a larger Tri-Valley FPD should be considered.

8. Evaluation of Management Efficiencies

- The White Mountain FPD is managed by an elected board of commissioners and a volunteer fire chief.
- The board of directors' individual skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications, motivation and the time they have available for the district determine the effectiveness of the White Mountain FPD and its efficiency.
- In the past, the White Mountain FPD has set goals and objectives on an incremental basis to meet identified needs.
- The White Mountain FPD has no long-term planning documents.
- The district needs to develop a budget and funding sources that will allow for the development of contingency funds.

- While the district provides adequate service to existing residents of the area, its ISO rating is 8, and it may not have the resources (particularly personnel) to serve the long-term needs of the area.

9. Local Accountability and Governance

- The White Mountain FPD complies with the minimum requirements for open meetings and public records.
- Public accessibility to district information is limited and is often based on the availability of the board officers.
- Public participation in the decision-making process is limited and usually occurs only when a controversial item is on the agenda.

Sphere of Influence Findings

1. Present and Planned Land Uses

Land use within Benton and Hammil Valleys is predominantly residential and agricultural with smaller areas of commercial, mixed use, open space, and public uses. The planned land uses for the area are similar. Development will be concentrated primarily within and adjacent to existing development although land use designations for the area allow for the conversion of agricultural lands to residential uses with large lot sizes.

2. Present and Probable Need For Public Facilities and Services

Benton and Hammil have an existing and continuing need for public facilities and services to serve the increasing residential development in the area.

3. Present Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services

The district currently provides an adequate level of service but has identified a need to improve both its facilities and services in order to serve additional development.

4. Social or Economic Communities of Interest

The district area exhibits social and economic interdependence with communities in the Tri-Valley and with Bishop in Inyo County. An interdependence with Bishop has no relevance in determining the sphere of influence for the district since special districts cannot provide services outside of their county. Interdependence with the remainder of the Tri-Valley has no relevance in determining the sphere of influence for the district since the remainder of the Tri-Valley is within the district boundaries for the White Mountain FPD.

Sphere of Influence Recommendation

The Sphere of Influence for the White Mountain Fire Protection District should remain as it is, coterminous with the boundaries of the district. The withdrawn lands located within the boundaries of the district should be annexed back into the district, preferably is a single reorganization action.

Reorganization Recommendation

Section 56001 of the California Government Code states that:

The Legislature also finds that, whether governmental services are proposed to be provided by a single-purpose agency, several agencies, or a multipurpose agency, responsibility should be given to the agency or agencies that can best provide government services.

Currently, Benton and Chalfant are served by separate fire protection entities, with separate facilities, equipment and administration. In addition, both the White Mountain Fire Protection District from Benton and the Chalfant Valley Fire Department from Chalfant respond to calls from the Hammil Valley; Hammil Valley is within the boundaries of the White Mountain FPD but it has no fire facilities or equipment and is roughly equidistant from Benton and Chalfant. The Chalfant Valley Fire Department and the White Mountain FPD are both small districts with limited physical and financial resources. The Chalfant Fire Department was originally a part of a larger White Mountain FPD. Due primarily to socio-economic distinctions, this area was detached from White Mountain FPD and the new Chalfant Valley Fire Department, which is a Community Services District, was formed in 1988. Both Benton and Chalfant are experiencing significant growth and there is a need throughout the Tri-Valley for expanded fire protection and emergency medical services.

At some point in the future, a regional Tri-Valley fire protection entity might best provide fire protection services for the area. Although a larger combined fire protection entity for the Tri-Valley could potentially reduce administrative costs, eliminate duplication of services in the Hammil Valley, and enjoy greater economies of scale than the smaller districts, past socio-economic distinctions have resulted in two distinct districts for the Tri-Valley. If these socio-economic distinctions change in the future, a regional Tri-Valley fire protection entity should be considered. At that time, a reorganization study should be conducted to determine what governmental structure would best provide services for the region. Such a reorganization should only occur with the concurrence of both districts' Boards of Directors.

I. INTRODUCTION

Municipal Service Reviews

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 requires Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) to conduct comprehensive reviews of all municipal services in each county in California and to periodically update that information. The purpose of the municipal service reviews is to gather detailed information on public service capacities and issues.

Relationship Between Municipal Service Reviews and Spheres of Influence

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act requires LAFCOs to develop and determine the Sphere of Influence (SOI) for each applicable local governmental agency that provides services or facilities related to development. Government Code Section 56076 defines a SOI as “a plan for the probable physical boundaries and service area of a local agency.” Service reviews must be completed prior to the establishment or update of SOIs (§56430(a)). Spheres of influence must be reviewed and updated as necessary, but not less than once every five years (§56425).

The information and determinations contained in a Municipal Service Review are intended to guide and inform SOI decisions. Service reviews enable LAFCO to determine SOI boundaries and to establish the most efficient service provider for areas needing new service. They also function as the basis for other government reorganizations. Section 56430, as noted above, states that LAFCO can conduct these reviews “before, in conjunction with, but no later than the time it is considering an action to establish a SOI.”

The White Mountain Fire Protection District Municipal Service Review is being conducted in response to, and in conjunction with, an update of the sphere of influence for the district.

II. WHITE MOUNTAIN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Service Area

The White Mountain Fire Protection District (WMFPD) was formed in 1967 to provide structural fire protection to approximately 187 square miles in Benton, Hammil, and Chalfant Valleys. The district was reduced to 175 square miles in 1974 when 10 ranches were detached from the district. The district was further reduced, to approximately 123 square miles, by the formation of the Chalfant Valley Fire Protection District in 1988 (see Figure 1).

The boundaries of the district now include Benton and Hammil Valleys. The district is bordered to the east by the White Mountains, to the west by the Benton Range, to the south by the Chalfant Valley, and to the north by the Nevada State Line. The two valleys are located along an approximately 22-mile stretch of State Route 6, the only access through the area. There are no surface waters within the district. Topography within the district is characterized by the relatively flat floor of the valley, gently sloping alluvial fans to the sides of the valley floor and steep slopes above the alluvial fans. Vegetation in the district is primarily desert scrub.

Benton is a rural residential community with limited small businesses, an elementary school, community center, senior center, church, county roadway, Caltrans maintenance station, and a county landfill/transfer station. Surrounding areas include large ranches with irrigated cropland and other agricultural uses. The Hammil Valley is primarily agricultural, mostly irrigated cropland with dispersed ranches and residential development.

A number of large ranches that withdrew from the district in 1974, as well as the Benton Piute Reservation, are located within the district's boundaries (see Figure 2, Withdrawn Lands). The district provides service to those areas but does not receive property tax funds from that land.

Population Characteristics

Mono County GIS estimates that there are 420 parcels in the district, including 140 developed parcels (residential or commercial parcels valued at \$10,000 or more). The WMFPD estimates that there are approximately 700 households and 300 residents within the district.

Population data from the 2000 US Census and California Department of Finance population estimates show the population of the Tri-Valley to be 954 in 2000 and 974 in 2003 (Table 3, Mono County Housing Element). The population in Hammil Valley and Benton was approximately 489 in 2000 and 497 in 2003.

In 2000, 5 percent of the population in the Tri-Valley was under 5 years old, 20 percent was 5-17 years old, 61 percent was 18 to 64, and 13 percent was over 65 (Table 8A, Mono County Housing Element). Compared to other community areas, the Tri-Valley had one of the higher

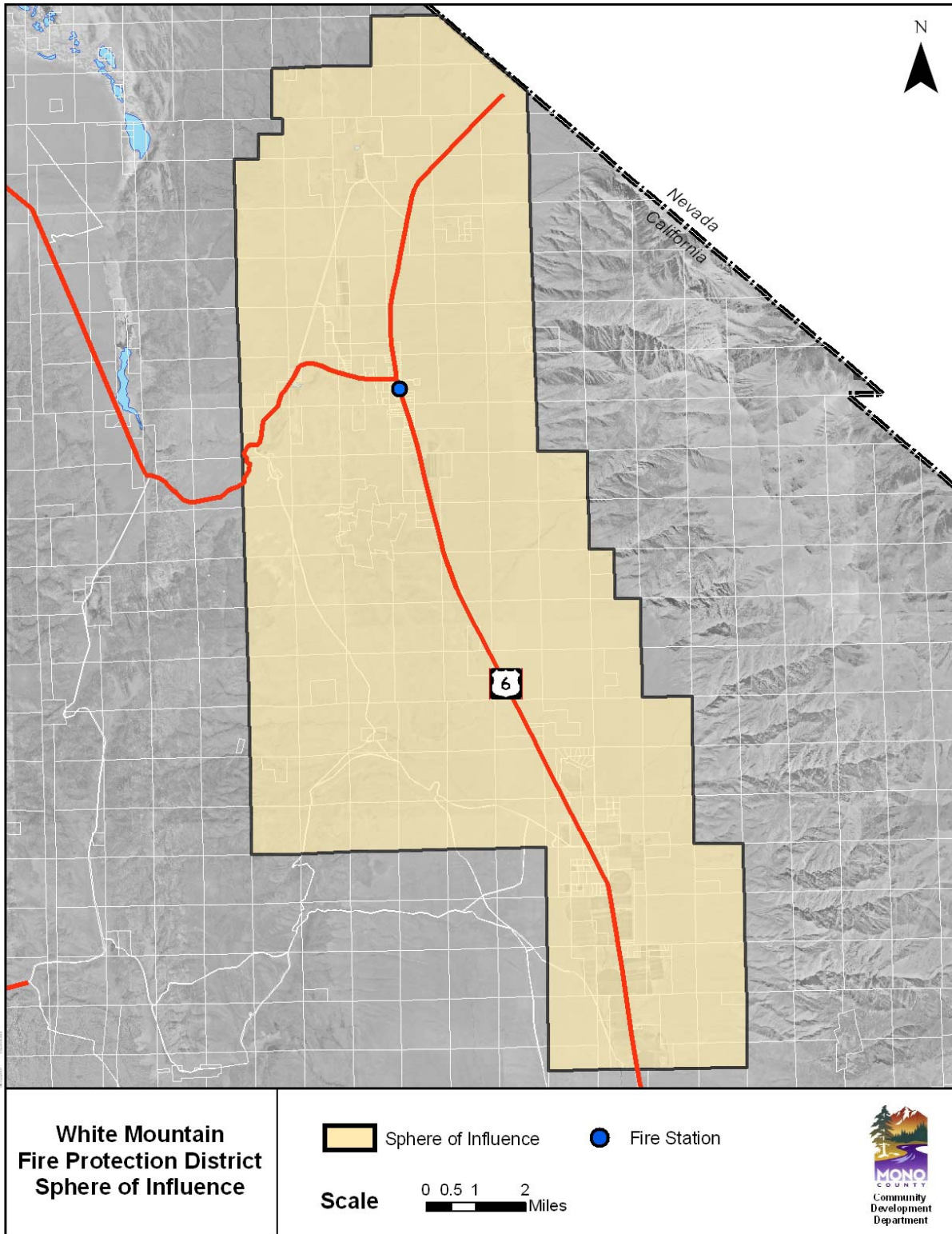


Figure 1
White Mountain Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence

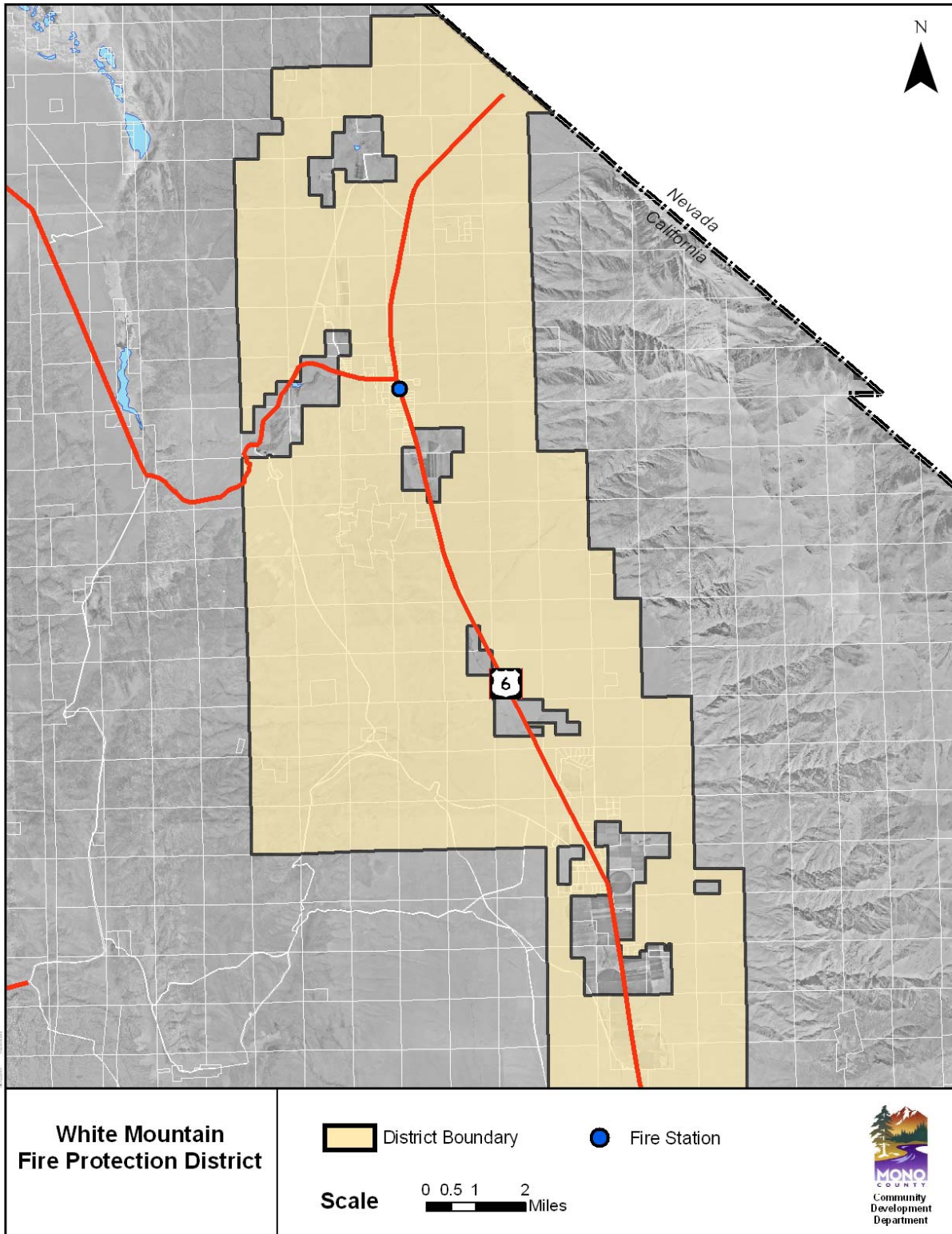


Figure 2
White Mountain Fire Protection District Boundaries—Withdrawn Lands

percentages of its population in the senior age group and the third largest number of people in that age group.

In 2000, there were 377 households in the Tri-Valley, a 3 percent increase from 1990 (Table 12, Housing Element). Seventy-seven percent of the households were owner-occupied and 23 percent were rented (Table 12, Housing Element).

A significant percentage of the residents of the Tri-Valley works outside of Mono County. Of 387 workers 16 or older in 2000, 71 percent worked outside of Mono County (Table 28, Housing Element). However, 54 percent of Tri-Valley workers commuted less than 30 minutes, indicating that many of those who worked outside of the county probably lived in Chalfant and worked in Bishop. Eighteen percent of the workers in the Tri-Valley spent 30-44 minutes commuting, 4 percent spent 45 to 59 minutes, and 16 percent spent 60 or more minutes commuting (Table 29, Housing Element).

Housing Characteristics

In 2000, the Census counted 510 housing units in the Tri-Valley; 55 percent of those units were single-family residences, and 45 percent were mobile homes (Table 35, Housing Element). Twenty-six percent of the units were vacant in 2000; approximately half of the vacant units were seasonal uses residences, the remaining vacant units were for rent, for sale, or vacant for other uses (Table 14, Housing Element).

Approximately 48 percent of the housing units in the Tri-Valley were constructed within the past 20 years; an additional 41 percent were built between 20 and 40 years ago and the remaining 10 percent are older than 40 years (Table 37, Housing Element). A housing conditions survey completed by Mono County in 2003 showed most of the housing in the area to be in good or fair condition (Table 36, Housing Element).

Services Provided

The district serves a full time residential population in the communities of Benton and Hammil Valley as well as travelers along State Route 6. It provides fire prevention/suppression and emergency medical response services, HazMat response, wildland firefighting, permit approvals and development proposal reviews.

ISO Rating

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is a private organization that supplies information used by underwriters to evaluate and price particular risks, including fire protection. ISO staff gathers information on individual properties and communities and, in turn, insurers use that information in underwriting personal and commercial property insurance, commercial liability and workers compensation policies. The ratings range from a score of 10 (no fire protection at all) to 1 (best fire protection possible). The ISO rating for the WMFPD is 8.

Land Ownership

The district includes large areas of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in addition to the privately owned parcels. Lands surrounding the district are generally

public lands managed by the Inyo National Forest. Private lands outside the WMFPD have no formal structural fire protection service.

Surrounding Fire Protection Facilities

The closest fire protection district to the White Mountain FPD is the Chalfant Valley Fire Protection District, which is located 20 miles south of the district via State Route 6.

Fire Hazard

Wildfire hazards are considered to be one of the most prevalent natural hazards in Mono County due to their repeated occurrence, the damage they have caused in the past, and the geographically widespread nature of the hazard (Mono County Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan). Most of the developed parcels in the White Mountain FPD are in areas identified by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) as Wildland Fire Hazard Areas (see Figure 3).

Local Fire History

Recent wildland fire history for the area is available from the Bureau of Land Management's Bishop Fire Management Plan. The BLM's Fire Management Unit for the Benton, Hammil, and Chalfant Valleys contains 218,957 acres; 178,556 acres of public lands managed by the BLM, 19,638 acres owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, 2,474 acres owned by the State, and 18,289 acres privately owned.

Between 1980 and 2002, 82 wildland fires occurred wholly or partially within this Fire Management Unit, burning a total of 271 acres (includes acres burned outside the Fire Management Unit boundary). Fire cause was 39% natural (lightning), 49% human-caused and 12% unknown.

Planned Land Uses

The Mono County Land Use Element provides for substantial additional development in Benton. The additional development allowed by the plan would be predominantly rural residential development throughout the valley, along with limited commercial uses and mixed-use development in Benton that could incorporate residential development and commercial development. The commercial development would occur in the existing community along State Routes 6 and 120. Residential development could also occur throughout the valley on agricultural lands. A large amount of the land designated for rural residential has large minimum lot sizes (4 acres or more) which means that the development would be spread out. Residential development could also occur on lands designated for agricultural uses and could be similarly spread out.

Hammil Valley has a development credits program that allows a certain number of units to be developed per parcel, depending on the size of the parcel and the ownership. Despite this limitation, additional residential development could occur in the Hammil Valley.

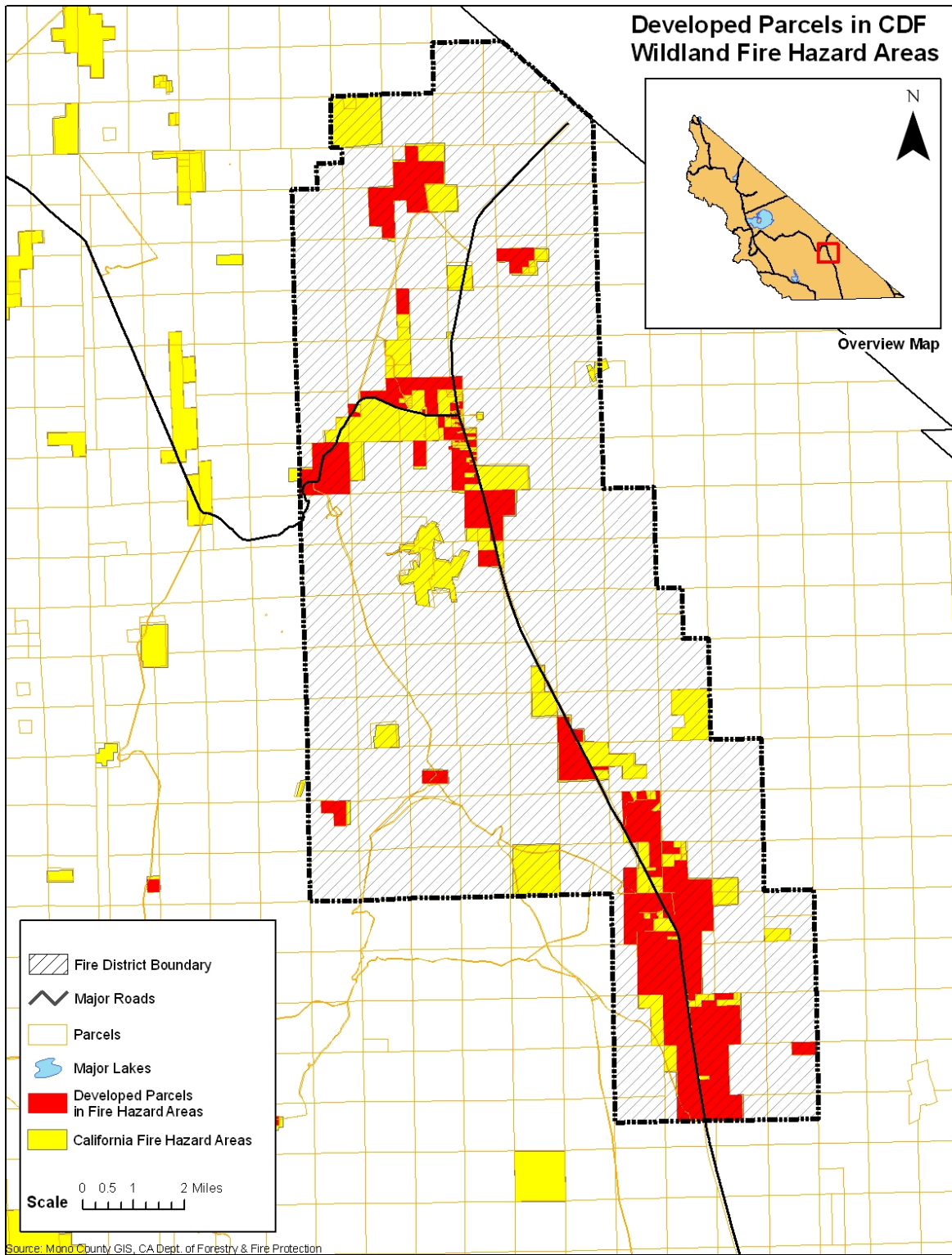


Figure 3
White Mountain Wildland Fire Hazard Areas

Mono County Fire Safe Standards

The Mono County Fire Safe Standards (Chapter 22 of the Mono County Land Development Regulations) apply to new development in State Responsibility Areas, generally areas outside fire district boundaries. They are intended to provide the same practical effect as the State's Fire Safe Regulations. The Fire Safe Standards establish basic wildland fire protection standards in the State Responsibility Areas of Mono County for emergency access; signing and building numbering; private water supply reserves for fire use; roof covering standards; and vegetation modification.

Fire Safe Council

Fire safe councils are non-profit organizations created to advise citizens how best to deal with the threat of wildfires to homes, communities and natural resources in the urban/wildland interface. Fire safe councils provide information on creating defensible space around structures, creating fire safe landscaping, and provide home inspections. The Eastern Sierra Regional Fire Safe Council provides fire safe information to homeowners and communities throughout Inyo and Mono Counties. Many communities in Mono County have local fire safe councils. There is currently no fire safe council in the White Mountain Fire Protection District.

District Issues of Concern

Growth is a major area of concern for the district right now. Several large subdivisions are currently in the planning stage for Benton and individual residential development is increasing. The availability of water is a concern. Since there are no hydrants and no surface water, the district relies on farms that have water available. Funding for equipment and personnel is a constant concern. Communications are poor and mapping for the area needs to be improved.

The need for improved emergency medical services in the Tri-Valley is a concern. Tri-Valley residents want a paramedic in the Tri-Valley. Currently, there are no Advanced Life Support (ALS) services available in the Tri-Valley and local EMTs are not equipped to handle serious emergencies. The closest advanced life support services are in Bishop, which is 30-40 minutes away.

The district currently provides services to lands that withdrew from the district in 1974 but that are located within its boundaries. The district receives no property tax revenues from those lands. Both the 1987 and the 1992 Sphere of Influence Reports for White Mountain Fire Protection District recommended annexation of the withdrawn lands.

District Planning

The FPD, as is typical with many rural districts, does not have a master fire protection plan, or a capital improvement program. Planning for the district occurs by the board of commissioners on an incremental basis as the need arises. The District has adopted and is implementing the California Uniform Fire Code with respect to fire hydrants—the district requires one hydrant for every four homes built by a developer.

DISTRICT SERVICES

Fire Suppression and Emergency Medical Response

Structural fire protection is provided to valley residents from the district's fire station in Benton. The station is manned by 15 volunteer firefighters, with an average of 2 of them being able to respond midday. There are no fire hydrants within the district. The district estimates that 40 percent of the district is accessible within 5 minutes, 35 percent is accessible within 10 minutes, an additional 15 percent within 15 minutes and the last 10 percent within 20 or more minutes. As a result, the average response time to an emergency within the district is approximately 5 minutes. The district also responds to calls from Mineral County and Esmerelda County in Nevada and from the Benton Piute Reservation south of Benton Hot Springs.

The district provides emergency medical response with 3 of the volunteer firefighters qualified as EMT1s. Eight of the volunteers are trained as First Responders. The district operates an ambulance that provides Basic Life Support (BLS) services. The district's ambulance is currently on loan from Symons Emergency Specialties in Bishop. There are no Advanced Life Support (ALS) services in the Tri-Valley; the nearest ALS services are in Bishop, 30-40 minutes away.

Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Mono County subsidizes BLS response times and services in the Tri-Valley by providing financial support for emergency medical calls in the area. The funds received from the county for calls in which district personnel provide BLS services and/or transportation may be used by the district as compensation for the volunteers who provided the services as an incentive to retain, train, and recruit volunteers with emergency medical skills and certification.

The district also reviews development proposals and building permits. Three volunteer firefighters have received formal training in Hazmat spills and one volunteer has completed Awareness Hazmat training and can provide service for Hazmat spills.

Mutual Aid and Service Agreements

Mono County contains eleven fire protection districts, all of which belong to a county fire service association and are party to a countywide mutual aid agreement. The agreement formalizes the procedure for each district to send personnel and equipment to fires and emergencies beyond district boundaries when needed. The districts have also established informal service areas for the unserved private lands that are outside of any local fire protection district. These informal service areas reflect a recognized moral – not legal – responsibility of the districts to assist in the protection of life and property in such areas.

The district maintains mutual aid agreements with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the US Forest Service (USFS), the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), and the Chalfant Valley Fire Department. Although section 13007 of the Health and Safety Code authorizes fire protection districts to collect fees from the property owners to cover the cost of responding to a fire, the White Mountain Fire Protection District derives little, if any, revenue

from serving non-district areas. The FPD is, however, reimbursed for the cost of responding to fires on federal lands through its memorandum of understanding with the BLM and the USFS.

Table 1: White Mountain Fire Protection District Services and Programs

Type of Service	Provider	Service Capacity and Other Notes
<i>Fire Services</i>		
Fire Suppression	All Staff	
Residential Inspection		Not provided
Commercial Inspection		Not provided
Burn Permits		Not provided
Fire Safe Inspections		Not provided
Hydrant Inspections		Not provided
Defensible Space/Brush Reduction		Not provided
HazMat	3 volunteers with Awareness training	
<i>Rescue Services</i>		
Swift Water Rescue		Not provided
Rope Rescue		Not provided
Extrication/Vehicle Rescue		Not provided
<i>Medical Services</i>		
Basic Life Support	3 EMTs	
First Responder	8 trained staff	
<i>Other Safety Services and Programs</i>		
Public Education Program		Not provided
School Programs		Not provided
Community Activities		Not provided
<i>Development</i>		
Plans Review	Chief	
Permit Approval	Chief	
Will-Serve Letters	Chief	

Infrastructure and Facilities

District facilities include the firehouse in Benton. There are no facilities located in Hammil Valley. District equipment includes the following: two engines/pumpers, a water tender, a rescue vehicle, a wildland vehicle, two pickups, and an ambulance (on loan from Symons Emergency Specialties in Bishop). One piece of equipment was purchased new; the remaining equipment was purchased used. The district indicates that it has an ongoing need for additional equipment. They also need to replace their fire engine, as it is old and failing mechanically.

In addition, the district has safety equipment for 18 volunteers, including 18 personal alert safety systems (PASS), 18 self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), and 18 sets of personal protective clothing (PPE), as required by Federal, State and local laws and standards, including those established by OSHA and NFPA.

Communications

Fires and medical emergencies are dispatched to the WMFPD from the Mono County Sheriff's Office in Bridgeport via the county's 911 emergency system. The district notes that communications between White Mountain and Mono 1 are poor. At times the district does not get any voices on their pagers; at other times they are not dispatched within their area. The district currently contains cell phone towers but coverage is poor which results in communications difficulties. The district has complete internet access.

Administration and Staffing

The district is managed by an elected board of commissioners. Meetings are generally held once monthly. Fifteen volunteer firefighters actively staff the district's facilities; a limited number of those volunteers have received formal training. Five have formal training in structural firefighting; three of those have completed Firefighter I training.

The volunteers receive training on a regular basis (approximately 6 hours a month) utilizing videos, hands-on training on the apparatus and medical training with the ambulance. Training is provided in-house by the Training Officer and the Battalion Chief. The district does not participated in any joint training. The principal staffing problem for the district is the lack of volunteers and the lack of funds to pay volunteers or paid firefighters.

Service Activity

The WMFPD responded to 53 calls in 2005. The WMFPD's service calls are 57 percent EMT calls, followed by vehicle accidents, and community outreach and education.

Table 2: White Mountain Fire Protection District Call Log--2006

<i>Incident Type Summary</i>	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Structural	0	0%
Vehicle Accident	16	30%
Emergency Medical	30	57%
HazMat	0	0%
Rescue	0	0%
Wildland Fire	1	2%
False Alarm	6	11%
TOTAL	53	100%

Funding and Budget

The White Mountain Fire Protection District relies heavily on property tax revenue for its funding. Equipment is the greatest expense of the WMFPD, at approximately 30 percent of the

total budget. Services represent 10 percent of the budget, supplies represent 20 percent of the budget, liability insurance 25 percent, salaries 2 percent, and training 5 percent. The district has no outstanding debt. Currently, there is no adopted Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The district does have a plan to replace apparatus but the budget will not cover apparatus replacement.

Table 3: White Mountain Fire Protection District Revenues and Expenditures, FY 2007-2008

Revenues	
Tax Allocation	\$ 46,499
Home Owners Exemption	117
Interest	(287)
Fire Mitigation Fees	(41,503)
Other	<u>8,783</u>
<i>Total Revenues</i>	13,609
Expenditures	
Equipment: Lease Payment	14,850
Service and Supplies	28,335
Insurance	<u>12,455</u>
<i>Total Expenditures</i>	55,640
Net Revenue Over Expenditures	(42,031)

III. SERVICE REVIEW ANALYSIS AND DETERMINATIONS

Government Code §56430 requires the analysis of nine factors when assessing the capabilities of public service agencies. Each of the required factors is discussed below as it pertains to fire protection districts in general and the White Mountain Fire Protection District specifically.

1. Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate the infrastructure needs and deficiencies of a district in terms of capacity, condition of facilities, service quality, and levels of service and its relationship to existing and planned service users

The infrastructure elements of fire protection and emergency services include facilities (stations), rolling stock (engines and ambulances), dispatch systems, water supplies and roadways. Service also depends on trained personnel.

In the context of fire and emergency services, infrastructure needs and deficiencies are indicated by facilities that do not provide adequate capacity to accommodate current or projected demand for service in the affected area. Adequacy of service can be measured by reviewing response times, coverage, mutual aid, staffing and the underlying water and roadway systems.

WMFPD--Facilities

The WMFPD currently has one fire station in Benton. There are no fire district facilities in the Hammil Valley. The district has indicated that newer and better facilities are a need of the district.

The district estimates that 40 percent of the district is accessible within 5 minutes, 35 percent is accessible within 10 minutes, an additional 15 percent within 15 minutes and the last 10 percent within 20 or more minutes. As a result, the average response time to an emergency within the district is approximately 5 minutes.

WMFPD--Apparatus and Other Equipment

The district relies heavily on aging fire equipment that needs to be replaced. The district has indicated that newer and better equipment and more equipment are a primary need of the district.

WMFPD--Personnel

The district has a current volunteer staff of 15. Volunteer staff are increasingly difficult to attract and retain. The population in the Tri-Valley contains a significant proportion of older residents (in 2000, 13 percent of the residents were over 65), as well as a significant proportion of the population who work outside of the valley (in 2000, 38 percent of the population commuted more than 30 minutes to work). As a result, many potential volunteers may be available only for very limited time periods or may not have the time or energy to provide community service at

the level of intensity required for volunteer firefighters. Currently, only 2 of the 15 WMFPD volunteers are available to respond during the middle of the day,

WMFPD--Dispatch System

The emergency services dispatch system in Mono County is operated by the Mono County Sheriff's office from facilities in Bridgeport. Volunteers receive dispatches directly over portable pagers. The district has indicated that communications between the district and Mono 1 in Bridgeport are often poor with the district unable to hear any voices on their pagers. The district also notes that they are not dispatched within their service area at times,

Mono County, along with the Town of Mammoth Lakes and emergency service providers throughout the county, is in the process of a 911 Addressing Project for the entire county. Addresses are being input into the county's GIS system and being field checked for accuracy. Once the project is complete, 911 dispatchers in Bridgeport will see the location of a call displayed on an interactive map on their computer and will be able to describe the location more accurately and quickly to emergency services personnel.

WMFPD--Roadways

The main access through the Tri-Valley is State Route 6, a paved, two-lane highway. There are a limited number of paved roads in Benton; otherwise, most of the other roads in Benton and Hammil Valleys are not paved.

WMFPD--Water Supply

The district considers water supply for fire suppression its area to be a critical problem. The district currently has no fire hydrants and must depend on the farms that have water available. Limited areas of development may also have water tanks for fire suppression. As the community grows, the availability of a secure water source for fire suppression will become a major issue.

Determinations

- The renovation or replacement of existing facilities will be needed to maintain or increase the quality of service provided by the district.
- Accelerated development will place more pressure on the WMFPD to augment its service capacities. Portions of the district may require new and increased infrastructure.
- The replacement of aging equipment and the purchase of additional equipment will be needed to maintain or increase the quality of service provided by the district.
- The district needs a longterm solution to the lack of sufficient volunteer personnel.
- Additional paved roadways could increase the quality of service provided by the district.
- The availability of a longterm reliable water supply directly impacts the district's ability to provide fire suppression services. The district's capacity to serve new development will be contingent on the development of a longterm dedicated water supply.

2. Growth and Population Projections for the Affected Area

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate service needs based on existing and anticipated growth patterns and population projections.

Existing and Anticipated Growth Patterns in Benton and Hammil

Development in the district is currently concentrated in the community of Benton and in smaller areas of residential development in the Hammil Valley. Future growth is anticipated to occur primarily in and adjacent to existing developed areas. Development on lands designated for agricultural uses would create new pockets of development away from currently developed areas. The Mono County General Plan Land Use Element provides for the following buildout in Benton and Hammil:

Table 4A: Buildout Figures for Benton

Land Use Designation	Density	Acres	Maximum Potential Dwelling Units
ER Estate Residential	1 du/acre		
RR Rural Residential	1 du/acre	1,799	586 ^a
MU Mixed Use	15 du/acre	110	1,650 ^b
RU Rural Resort	1 du/5 acres	35	---
C Commercial	15 du/acre	15	225 ^c
I Industrial	---	40	---
PF Public/Quasi-Public Facilities	---	45	---
RM Resource Management	1 du/40 acres	893	22
AG Agriculture	1 du/2.5 ac.	3,578	1,391
Total Private Lands		6,515	3,874
RM Resource Management – Federal/State	---	37,248	---
Total		43,763	3,874

Notes:

- a. 492 acres RR; 288 acres RR 4 (4-acre minimum lot size); 16 acres RR 7 (7-acre minimum lot size); 775 acres RR 5 (5-acre minimum lot size); 134 acres RR 10 (10-acre minimum lot size); 234 acres RR 40 (40-acre minimum lot size).
- b. Assumes the development of a water and sewer system to obtain this density.
- c. 202 acres designated AG 5 (5 acre minimum lot size); 22 acres AG 7 (7-acre minimum lot size).

Table 4B: Buildout Figures for Hammil Valley

Land Use Designation	Density	Acres	Maximum Potential Dwelling Units
RR Rural Residential	1 du/acre	411	17 ^a
PF Public/Quasi-Public Facilities	---	3	---
RM Resource Management	1 du/40 acres	355	9
AG Agriculture	1 du/2.5 ac.	6,134	278 ^a
Total Private Lands		6,903	304
RM Resource Management – Federal/State	---	60,674	---
Total		67,577	304

Notes:

- a. Hammil Valley has a development credits program that allows a certain number of units to be developed per parcel, depending on the size of the parcel and the ownership. Dwelling units were calculated using the Development Credits Table included in the land use policies for the Tri-Valley.

Seasonal Population

The Tri-Valley does not experience the levels of tourism that many other communities in the County do. While the visitors it does experience can cause an increased demand for services, such as emergency medical response and vehicular accident response, there is no commensurate increase in revenues available to provide those services.

In 2000, the Census counted 726 housing units in the Tri-Valley; 58 percent of those units were single-family residences, 32 percent were multiple-family residences, and 10 percent were mobilehomes (Table 35, Housing Element). Seventeen percent of the units were vacant in 2000; approximately half of the vacant units were seasonal use residences, the remaining vacant units were for rent, for sale, or vacant for other uses (Table 14, Housing Element).

Population Projections

Population data from the 2000 US Census and California Department of Finance population estimates show the population in the Tri-Valley to be 954 in 2000 and 974 in 2003. In 2000, there were 377 households in the Tri-Valley. The population in the White Mountain FPD is projected to increase to 619 by 2020 and 668 by 2030 (State Department of Finance Report P-3, Population Projections¹). Overall, the population in Mono County is aging. The median age in the unincorporated area increased from 33 in 1990 to 40.1 in 2000 (Mono County Housing Element). The number of seniors 65 years and older increased from 10 percent of the unincorporated population in 1990 to 12 percent in 2000. Of the communities in the county, the Tri-Valley had one of the larger populations of seniors 65 years and older. In 2000, 127

¹ This assumes that the population in the unincorporated area remains at approximately 45 percent of the total county population, that the population in the Tri-Valley remains at approximately 16.5 percent of the total unincorporated population, and that the population in the district remains at approximately 51 percent of the total Tri Valley population, as they were in 2000.

residents of the Tri-Valley were 65 or older; that number represents 13 percent of the total population in the Tri-Valley and 19 percent of the total senior population in the county.

Area Plan Development Policies

The **Tri-Valley Area Plan** in the **Mono County General Plan Land Use Element** contains several policies that address public facilities and services in Benton and Hammil, including fire protection, i.e.:

- Policy 5: Encourage the timing of growth to allow for efficient use of existing public facilities and services and for adequate planning for additional public facilities and services.
- Action 5.1: Allow additional residential subdivision only when adequate services (including fire protection, water, and school facilities) are available or planned for development. The proponent of a residential subdivision shall include this assessment as part of the environmental review process.
- Action 5.2: To permit the efficient delivery of public services, encourage residential development in Benton to take place on parcels contiguous to existing development.
- Action 5.4: New development projects, including subdivisions, shall comply with fire safe regulations and obtain "will serve" letters from the White Mountain Fire Protection District.
- Action 5.5: Subdivisions and/or building permits shall not be approved in areas that are withdrawn and/or not within the White Mountain Fire Protection District until such areas are brought into the district.

These policies require adequate fire protection services before development can occur and do not allow additional development to occur on withdrawn lands until those lands are brought into the White Mountain FPD.

Determinations

- The Mono County General Plan Land Use Element allows for significant additional growth in the area served by the White Mountain FPD.
- Growth is anticipated to occur primarily in and adjacent to existing developed areas. Development on lands designated for agricultural uses would create new pockets of development away from currently developed areas.
- Visitors to the area will continue to increase demand for services such as emergency medical response and vehicular accident response while providing no commensurate increase in revenues available to provide those services. There is a need to have these users pay for their share of the services.
- The population in the area served by the White Mountain FPD is projected to increase to 619 by 2020 and 668 by 2030, creating an increased demand for fire and emergency medical services.
- The population will continue to age, creating an increased demand for emergency medical services.
- Policies in the **Tri-Valley Area Plan** in the **Mono County General Plan Land Use Element** require the county to allow additional residential subdivision in Benton only when adequate services, including fire protection services, are available or planned for development. New development and subdivisions must comply with fire safe regulations and obtain a will-serve letter from the White Mountain Fire Protection District.

Subdivisions or building permits shall not be approved in areas that are withdrawn from or not within the White Mountain FPD until those areas are brought into the district.

3. Financing Constraints and Opportunities

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate factors that affect the financing of needed improvements.

Expenses for special districts generally fall into one of three categories: (1) acquisition of facilities and major capital equipment, (2) employee expenses, and (3) ongoing operations and maintenance costs. The primary criteria that should be considered when evaluating adequacy of potential funding sources is availability, adequacy to meet the need, equity between existing and future residents, stability, and ability to cover on-going operating and maintenance costs.

WMFPD

The WMFPD is dependent on property taxes as its single most important source of revenue, followed by fire mitigation fees. The district charges 50 cents per square foot for fire mitigation fees for all new development; their fee is one of the lower fees in the county, below the countywide average of 63 cents per square foot. The district also receives funding from the County through the Special District Augmentation Fund. This is a discretionary program intended to assist fire districts achieve longterm financial stability. Augmentation funds can only be used to provide equipment for enhanced fire protection and emergency medical services within the fire districts.

In FY 2003-2004, the district received \$28,574 in property taxes (31 percent of total revenues), \$8,656 in fire mitigation fees (9 percent of total revenues), \$838 in interest income (1 percent of total revenues), \$134 in intergovernmental transfers from the State (<1 percent of total revenues), and \$55,804 in intergovernmental transfers from the County (59 percent of total revenues).

With the increase in growth, previously adequate funding arrangements may no longer be adequate. To fund the infrastructure needed to support new residents, the district may need to rely more heavily on mechanisms such as impact fees, grants, and partnerships. Absent such changes, the WMFPD may be hard pressed to maintain service levels in the long run.

The district currently serves areas that detached from the district in 1974 and that therefore provide no property tax revenues to the district. These lands are primarily large ranches located outside of community areas. Although both the 1987 and 1992 Sphere of Influence Reports for the district recommended annexing those lands back into the district, annexation has never occurred. The district has noted that it needs to get the withdrawn lands back into the district.

Determinations

- The WMFPD's future financing will continue to rely primarily on property tax revenues, fire mitigation fees and augmentation (in the form of aid from other governmental agencies and grants).

- The district's fire mitigation fee of 50 cents per square foot of new construction is one of the lower fees in the county, below the countywide average of 63 cents per square foot. An opportunity may exist to increase the fee.
- The adequacy of property tax revenues to fund local facilities and services has steadily declined over time. There is a need to ensure that property tax assessments are kept current.
- The district needs to annex the withdrawn lands to which it currently provides service.
- It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain existing service levels as costs increase over time.
- There are opportunities to coordinate with other fire districts and agencies to increase efforts to secure grant funding.

4. Cost Avoidance Opportunities

Overview

Purpose: To identify practices or opportunities that may aid in eliminating unnecessary costs.

Cost avoidance opportunities are defined as actions to eliminate unnecessary costs derived from, but not limited to, duplication of service efforts, higher than necessary administration/operation cost ratios, use of outdated or deteriorating infrastructure and equipment, underutilized equipment or buildings or facilities, overlapping/inefficient service boundaries, inefficient purchasing or budgeting practices, and lack of economies of scale.

WMFPD

Generally, in Mono County each community area is a discrete geographic area and, as a result, there is no duplication of service efforts or overlapping or inefficient service boundaries. The Tri-Valley is its own discrete geographic area with three distinct community areas in Benton, Hammil, and Chalfant. Currently, Benton and Chalfant are served by separate fire protection entities, with separate facilities, equipment and administration. In addition, both the White Mountain Fire Protection District from Benton and the Chalfant Valley Fire Department from Chalfant respond to calls from the Hammil Valley; Hammil Valley is within the boundaries of the White Mountain FPD but it has no fire facilities or equipment and is roughly equidistant from Benton and Chalfant.

Due to the small size of each of these districts, their resources, both physical and financial, are extremely limited. The White Mountain FPD is managed and administered by volunteer fire fighters and an elected board of commissioners. The department conducts joint training with other fire departments, including the Chalfant Valley Fire Department.

As they level of cooperation among fire districts in the county has increased in recent years, the districts routinely share information and best practices in order to reduce or avoid unnecessary costs. One cost that is difficult to avoid is volunteer training. Small districts may spend limited resources to train volunteer personnel only to have those qualified volunteers leave the district.

Determinations

- The Tri-Valley area is a discrete geographic area within Mono County with three distinct community areas—Benton, Hammil, and Chalfant.
- Although there are no overlapping district boundaries, there are overlapping service boundaries since both the Chalfant Valley Fire Department and the White Mountain FPD provide services to the Hammil Valley.
- There are no fire facilities or equipment in the Hammil Valley.
- The White Mountain FPD is a volunteer department with an elected board of commissioners—administrative costs are generally low.
- Although the district strives to keep operations and maintenance costs low by sharing services and training with other districts and by purchasing through associations in order to take advantage of lower prices or discounts, small districts tend to suffer from a lack of economies of scale.
- Cooperation among fire districts is an important part of reducing costs.
- The cost of volunteer training is unavoidable and may be lost when trained volunteers leave the district. A possibility exists for the district to offer benefit contracts so that a volunteer agrees to be with the district for a specific amount of time or to reimburse the district for training costs.
- Integrated planning, especially long range planning, is an important part of cost avoidance. The district has no long-range plan to address the demands imposed by growth within the district.
- The Chalfant Valley Fire Department and the White Mountain FPD are both small districts with limited physical and financial resources. The Chalfant Fire Department was originally a part of a larger White Mountain FPD. Due primarily to socio-economic distinctions, this area was detached from White Mountain FPD and the new Chalfant Valley Fire Department, which is a Community Services District, was formed in 1988. Both Benton and Chalfant are experiencing significant growth and there is a need throughout the Tri-Valley for expanded fire protection and emergency medical services. If past socio-economic distinctions change substantially, the Tri-Valley could potentially benefit from a combined single Fire Protection District with separate facilities in Benton, Hammil, and Chalfant.

5. Opportunities for Rate Restructuring

Overview

Purpose: To identify opportunities to positively impact rates without decreasing service levels.

As noted in the Financing Constraints and Opportunities Section, funding for fire protection districts in Mono County relies heavily on property tax revenues combined with mitigation fees, augmentation funds, and other smaller revenue sources (grants, fundraisers, etc.). Each of these categories has inherent constraints that prevent an agency from restructuring them.

WMFPD

Property taxes – In California, the maximum property tax assessed on any land is generally 1% of the property's value. Agencies with a substantial portion of land under Williamson Act contracts have a lower assessed value, do not collect as much in property taxes in those parcels

as comparable land and rely on other funds to partially offset the lower collection of revenues. The WMFPD contains two Williamson Act contracts totaling 1420 acres.

Fire Mitigation Fees – The district has a resolution adopted by the County Board of Supervisors on the agency’s behalf that sets the fire fees for all new construction. The district’s fee of \$.50 per square foot of new construction is one of the lower fees in the county, below the countywide average of 63 cents per square foot. Other fire districts in the unincorporated area of the county charge \$.50 or \$.75 per square foot of new construction, or a set fee. Set fees range from \$832 in June Lake, with an additional fee for construction above 2000 square feet, to \$3,119 in Wheeler Crest).

Grants – Grant money is a one-time source that is useful in funding certain special projects but may be too unreliable or variable for ongoing expenses or recurring needs. Grants may help fund items that would have to be purchased out of the budget.

Determinations

- All funding mechanisms have inherent limitations that may prevent their implementation, use or restructure.
- The district could benefit from increasing its fire mitigation fee from \$.50 per square foot.
- The WMFPD should seek additional opportunities to reduce costs through cooperation and sharing with other agencies.
- The WMFPD should pursue grant funding.

6. Opportunities for Shared Facilities

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate the opportunities for a jurisdiction to share facilities and resources to develop more efficient service delivery systems.

Sharing facilities and resources can result in a more efficient and cost-effective delivery of resources.

WMFPD

Due to the geographic distance between most communities in the county, sharing facilities is not possible. Fire districts do share resources through mutual aid agreements. The most beneficial sharing of resources to residents in the County is the practice of deploying the nearest resource to an emergency. While there are costs associated with mutual aid and/or automatic aid, there is a direct benefit when an agency can rely on its neighbors for support. This ensures that residents of the County can be assured that there will be someone who will respond to an emergency without regard to jurisdictional issues. The fire districts in Mono County tend to do this very well.

The WMFPD shares resources in several other ways:

- They attend shared training sessions with the Chalfant Valley FPD and Bishop’s fire department.

- They maintain mutual aid agreements with BLM, CDF, USFS (for wildland fires), the Chalfant Valley FPD and counties in Nevada.
- They attend monthly county fire chiefs meetings.

The **Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan** prepared for Mono County and the Town of Mammoth Lakes identified a number of mitigation measures to address fire hazard planning in the county's communities. While the focus of the **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan** is on mitigation planning for wildland fire hazards, the mitigation measures identified in the plan apply to all fire hazards in the area, i.e.:

Mitigation W-3: Review and, if necessary update, the County's General Plan land use policies and regulations and building regulations to ensure that they address fire hazard planning as a component of the development process.

Mitigation W-5: Develop community-level fire plans for communities throughout the county, utilizing resources and assistance from the California Fire Alliance. These fire plans should address the following:

- Developing an informed, educated public that takes responsibility for its own decisions relating to wildfire protection.
- Developing an effective wildfire suppression program for local communities.
- Developing an aggressive hazardous fuel management program.
- Revising land use policies and standards to ensure that they protect life, property and local resource values.
- Implementing construction and property standards that provide defensible space.

Mitigation W-6: Develop and implement an ongoing countywide program to increase public awareness of wildland fire hazards.

Mitigation W-7: All communities and fire protection districts should participate in the Eastern Sierra Regional Firesafe Council.

Mitigation W-8: The county and the town should appoint a fire hazard coordinator with the responsibility for developing fire plans for the county, participating in the Eastern Sierra Regional Firesafe Council and the California Fire Alliance, coordinating with local, state, and federal fire protection and suppression entities, developing and implementing public education and awareness programs concerning fire safety including safe building materials and landscaping, and applying for funding for fire hazard mitigation such as fuel reduction programs.

Mitigation W-10: Help local landowners participate in the state's Vegetation Management Program (VMP), when applicable. The Vegetation Management Program (VMP) is a cost-sharing program that focuses on the use of prescribed fire and mechanical means to address wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands.

Mitigation W-11: Help local landowners participate in CDF's hazardous fuel reduction program.

Mitigation W-12: Help local landowners participate in the BLM's Wildland Urban Interface Grant Awards program for hazardous fuel reduction.

Responsibility for implementation of these mitigation measures lies with the County, the Regional Planning Advisory Committees, local fire protection districts, and the County Office of Emergency Services.

Emergency Medical Services

In areas of the county with paramedic services (generally along the Highway 395 corridor from the Nevada state line south to the Inyo County line), local fire protection district personnel play a crucial role in supporting the County paramedics with manpower, extrication services, and as “first responders”. The Tri-Valley has no paramedic service since it has in the past been an area of low population density and a relatively low volume of calls for emergency medical services.

The County charges for its paramedic services and has traditionally used areas of high volume and high revenues to help offset the cost of operations in areas of lower call volume and lower revenues. The County designated the Highway 395 corridor as an “Exclusive Operating Area” which gives the County the sole right to operate emergency services in that area. Since the Tri-Valley is not served directly by the Mono County paramedics, it was designated an “Operating Area” to allow for other services providers. As a result, Symons Emergency Specialties operates in the Tri-Valley upon request from the fire districts but their primary response obligation is to Bishop.

Residents of the Tri-Valley have long identified a need for paramedic services in the area. Both fire protection districts in the Tri-Valley have identified a need for paramedic service in the Tri-Valley in order to improve existing emergency medical services and to serve the increasing population in the area. The County recognizes the need to respond to an increased need for emergency medical services in the Tri-Valley. The County paramedic program is in the process of updating its system along the Highway 395 corridor and has stated that their ability to offer immediate support or additional equipment to the Tri-Valley area is very limited.

Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Mono County subsidizes BLS response times and services in the Tri-Valley by providing financial support for emergency medical calls in the area. The funds received from the county for calls in which district personnel provide BLS services and/or transportation may be used by the district as compensation for the volunteers who provided the services as an incentive to retain, train, and recruit volunteers with emergency medical skills and certification.

Determinations

- The largest impediment to greater sharing of resources and facilities in Mono County is geographic separation between fire protection districts.
- Fire districts in Mono County can share resources through joint training sessions, shared purchasing, and the implementation of mutual aid agreements.
- The **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan for Mono County** contains a number of mitigation measures to address fire hazard planning in the county’s communities. While the focus of the plan is on mitigation planning for wildland fire hazards, the mitigation measures identified in the plan apply to all fire hazards in the area. Responsibility for implementing those fire hazard planning measures rests with the County, the Regional Planning Advisory Committees, and local fire protection districts.
- The Tri-Valley currently has no paramedic service. The remainder of the county, along the Highway 395 corridor, has paramedic service provided by Mono County. When

paramedic services are provided for the Tri-Valley there is the opportunity to share resources and facilities with the fire protection districts in the area.

7. Government Structure Options

Overview

Purpose: To consider the advantages and disadvantages of various government structures to provide service.

Government Code §56001 declares that it is the policy of the State to encourage orderly growth and development essential to the social, fiscal, and economic well being of the State. The Code further states that “this policy should be effected by the logical formation and modification of the boundaries of local agencies, with a preference granted to accommodating additional growth within, or through the expansion of, the boundaries of those local agencies which can best accommodate and provide necessary governmental services.”

For local agency consolidations to occur there has to be significant (and popularly desired) cost savings or an increase in service. For fire protection districts, consolidations might be recommended if any of the following would occur as a result of consolidation:

1. A reduction in the number of stations where service coverage might create unnecessary overlap.
2. An increase in the staffing of stations where currently staffing is limited.
3. An increase in staffing that reduces response times can be achieved.
4. A reduction in the number of senior administrative staff can be achieved.
5. Economies of scale for costly services can be attained.

WMFPD

The Tri-Valley is its own discrete geographic area with two distinct community areas in Benton, and Chalfant, and an agricultural community in the Hammil Valley. Currently, Benton and Chalfant are served by separate fire protection entities, with separate facilities, equipment and administration. Both the White Mountain Fire Protection District from Benton and the Chalfant Valley Fire Department from Chalfant respond to calls from the Hammil Valley; Hammil Valley is within the boundaries of the White Mountain FPD but it has no fire facilities or equipment and is roughly equidistant from Benton and Chalfant. Chalfant Valley Fire Department receives little or no revenue from serving parcels in the Hammil Valley. Due to the small size of each of these districts, their resources, both physical and financial, are extremely limited.

Communities in Mono County are unincorporated, except for the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Mono County and a variety of special districts provide government services to unincorporated communities. The county has several distinct regions, i.e. Antelope Valley, Bridgeport Valley, Mono Basin, June Lake, Long Valley, Wheeler Crest/Paradise, and the Tri-Valley. Due to the geographical distance between these regions, and between some of the communities within certain regions, separate fire districts serve each community area. Residents in each region generally desire local governance of services. However, some regions of the county, such as the

Tri-Valley, have small abutting fire districts serving separate communities. It would be possible to merge those districts into a more regional fire district with facilities in each community. Creating a regional fire district in the Tri-Valley could potentially reduce administrative costs, eliminate duplication of services in the Hammil Valley, and create a more financially stable district and one that would enjoy greater economies of scale than the smaller districts. One district that was planning for future development in the entire Tri-Valley would also create a more cohesive approach to the long-term provision of fire protection services in the region.

Determinations

- In regions of the county with separate, distinct communities that are geographically remote from each other, public services are most logically provided by special districts rather than by a larger entity such as the county.
- In regions of the county that have several small fire districts serving separate communities within the region, such as the Tri-Valley, an opportunity exists to merge the districts to create a regional fire district with facilities in each community.
- Creating a regional fire district in the Tri-Valley could reduce administrative costs, eliminate duplication of services in the Hammil Valley, and create a more financially stable district and one that would enjoy greater economies of scale than the smaller districts. One district that was planning for future development in the entire Tri-Valley would also create a more cohesive approach to the longterm provision of fire protection services in the region.

8. Evaluation of Management Efficiencies

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate the quality of public services in comparison to cost.

As defined by OPR, the term “management efficiency,” refers to the organized provision of the highest quality public services with the lowest necessary expenditure of public funds. An efficiently managed entity (1) promotes and demonstrates implementation of continuous improvement plans and strategies for budgeting, managing costs, training and utilizing personnel and customer service and involvement, (2) has the ability to provide service over the short and long term, (3) has the resources (fiscal, manpower, equipment, adopted service or work plans) to provide adequate service, (4) meets or exceeds environmental and industry service standards, as feasible considering local conditions or circumstances, (5) and maintains adequate contingency reserves. “Management Efficiency” is generally seen as organizational efficiency including the potential for consolidation.

The purpose of management is to effectively carry out the principal function and purpose of an agency. Good management will ensure that the agency’s mission is accomplished and that the agency’s efforts are sustainable into the future. Unfortunately, “good management” is a relatively subjective issue, and one that is hard to quantify.

WMFPD

An elected board of directors and a volunteer fire chief manages the White Mountain FPD. Management input is also provided during monthly Mono County fire chief meetings. As a small district, the White Mountain FPD has limited physical and financial resources. The district is able to provide adequate service in the short-term to the existing residents of the area but may not have the resources (particularly personnel) to provide long-term services to the planned development in the area.

The district currently has no long-term planning documents but is in the process of identifying future needs in order to develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). There are no long-term plans for budgeting, managing costs, or training and utilizing personnel. The district's current ISO rating is 8, which is low. The district has no contingency reserves.

Determinations

- The White Mountain FPD is managed by an elected board of commissioners and a volunteer fire chief.
- The board of directors' individual skills, knowledge, experience, qualifications, motivation and the time they have available for the district determine the effectiveness of the district and its efficiency.
- In the past, the White Mountain FPD has set goals and objectives on an incremental basis to meet identified needs.
- The White Mountain FPD has no longterm planning documents.
- The district needs to develop a budget and funding sources that will allow for the development of contingency funds.
- While the district provides adequate service to existing residents of the area, its ISO rating is 8, and it may not have the resources (particularly personnel) to serve the longterm needs of the area.

9. Local Accountability and Governance

Overview

Purpose: To evaluate the accessibility and levels of public participation associated with an agency's decision-making and management processes.

Special districts such as fire protection districts are required to adopt budgets at open public meetings and to file their budgets with the county auditor. They are required to have annual or biennial independent audits. Districts are subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act for meetings, agendas and minutes. They are also subject to the Public Records Act.

Complying with the minimum open meeting and information requirements is not sufficient to allow an adequate amount of visibility and accountability. Outreach efforts, including convenient meeting times, additional notice of meetings and dissemination of district information, are desirable.

WMFPD

The WMFPD complies with the minimum open meetings and public information requirements. The district has indicated that few members of the public attend board meetings unless a controversial item is on the agenda.

Determinations

- The WMFPD complies with the minimum requirements for open meetings and public records.
- Public accessibility to district information is limited and is often based on the availability of the board officers.
- Public participation in the decision-making process is limited and usually occurs only when a controversial item is on the agenda.

IV. SPHERE OF INFLUENCE RECOMMENDATION

In determining the sphere of influence for each local agency, Government Code §56425 requires the Local Agency Formation Commission to consider and prepare a written statement of its determination with respect to four required findings. Each of the required findings is discussed below as it pertains to the White Mountain Fire Protection District.

1. Present and Planned Land Uses

Discussion:

Present land uses in the area served by the White Mountain FPD are primarily residential and agricultural with limited commercial facilities. The Mono County GIS estimates that there are 420 parcels in the district, including 140 developed parcels (residential or commercial parcels valued at \$10,000 or more). Population data from the 2000 US Census and California Department of Finance population estimates show the population in the Benton and Hammil Valleys was approximately 489 in 2000 and 497 in 2003. In 2000, there were 377 households in the Tri-Valley.

The Mono County General Plan Land Use Element provides for the following buildout in Benton and Hammil:

Table 4A: Buildout Figures for Benton

Land Use Designation	Density	Acres	Maximum Potential Dwelling Units
ER Estate Residential	1 du/acre		
RR Rural Residential	1 du/acre	1,799	586 ^a
MU Mixed Use	15 du/acre	110	1,650 ^b
RU Rural Resort	1 du/5 acres	35	---
C Commercial	15 du/acre	15	225 ^c
I Industrial	---	40	---
PF Public/Quasi-Public Facilities	---	45	---
RM Resource Management	1 du/40 acres	893	22
AG Agriculture	1 du/2.5 ac.	3,578	1,391
Total Private Lands		6,515	3,874
RM Resource Management – Federal/State	---	37,248	---
Total		43,763	3,874

Notes:

- a. 492 acres RR; 288 acres RR 4 (4-acre minimum lot size); 16 acres RR 7 (7-acre minimum lot size); 775 acres RR 5 (5-acre minimum lot size); 134 acres RR 10 (10-acre minimum lot size); 234 acres RR 40 (40-acre minimum lot size).
- b. Assumes the development of a water and sewer system to obtain this density.
- c. 202 acres designated AG 5 (5 acre minimum lot size); 22 acres AG 7 (7-acre minimum lot size).

Table 4B: Buildout Figures for Hammil Valley

Land Use Designation	Density	Acres	Maximum Potential Dwelling Units
RR Rural Residential	1 du/acre	411	17 ^a
PF Public/Quasi-Public Facilities	---	3	---
RM Resource Management	1 du/40 acres	355	9
AG Agriculture	1 du/2.5 ac.	6,134	278 ^a
Total Private Lands		6,903	304
RM Resource Management – Federal/State	---	60,674	---
Total		67,577	304

Notes:

- a. Hammil Valley has a development credits program that allows a certain number of units to be developed per parcel, depending on the size of the parcel and the ownership. Dwelling units were calculated using the Development Credits Table included in the land use policies for the Tri-Valley.

Finding:

Land use within Benton and Hammil Valleys is predominantly residential and agricultural with smaller areas of commercial, mixed use, open space, and public uses. The planned land uses for the area are similar. Development will be concentrated primarily within and adjacent to existing development although land use designations for the area allow for the conversion of agricultural lands to residential uses with large lot sizes.

2. Present and Probable Need For Public Facilities and Services

Discussion:

Increased development throughout the district’s service area has created an increased need for fire protection services now. The buildout allowed by the General Plan will create a greater demand for those services in the future.

Finding:

Benton and Hammil have an existing and continuing need for public facilities and services to serve the increasing residential development in the area.

3. Present Capacity of Public Facilities and Adequacy of Public Services

Discussion:

The district has no latent powers; fire protection is the only service it is authorized to provide. While the district provides adequate services with its existing facilities, infrastructure, and personnel, its ISO rating is 8. The district has identified a number of needs to continue to provide adequate service as well as to serve additional development, i.e.: new equipment and apparatus, improved communications, more EMTs and EMT training, a paramedic for the Tri-Valley, a solution to the lack of volunteer personnel, a longterm reliable water supply for firefighting, and funding to provide all of the above.

Finding:

The district currently provides an adequate level of service but has identified a need to improve both its facilities and services in order to serve additional development.

4. Social or Economic Communities of Interest

Discussion:

Due to the physical geography of the Tri-Valley and southern Mono County, communities in the Tri-Valley tend to interact socially and economically with other communities in the Tri-Valley as well as with Bishop in Inyo County. Interaction with other communities in Mono County is limited although increasing residential development in Benton and Chalfant may provide housing for residents who work in other Mono County communities.

Finding:

The district area exhibits social and economic interdependence with communities in the Tri-Valley and with Bishop in Inyo County. An interdependence with Bishop has no relevance in determining the sphere of influence for the district since special districts cannot provide services outside of their county. Interdependence with the remainder of the Tri-Valley has no relevance in determining the sphere of influence for the district since the remainder of the Tri-Valley is within the district boundaries for the White Mountain FPD.

Sphere of Influence Recommendation

The Sphere of Influence for the White Mountain Fire Protection District should remain as it is, coterminous with the boundaries of the district. The withdrawn lands located within the boundaries of the district should be annexed back into the district.

Reorganization Recommendation

Section 56001 of the California Government Code states that:

The Legislature also finds that, whether governmental services are proposed to be provided by a single-purpose agency, several agencies, or a multipurpose agency, responsibility should be given to the agency or agencies that can best provide government services.

Currently, Benton and Chalfant are served by separate fire protection entities, with separate facilities, equipment and administration. In addition, both the White Mountain Fire Protection District from Benton and the Chalfant Valley Fire Department from Chalfant respond to calls from the Hammil Valley; Hammil Valley is within the boundaries of the White Mountain FPD but it has no fire facilities or equipment and is roughly equidistant from Benton and Chalfant. The Chalfant Valley Fire Department and the White Mountain FPD are both small districts with limited physical and financial resources. The Chalfant Fire Department was originally a part of a larger White Mountain FPD. Due primarily to socio-economic distinctions, this area was detached from White Mountain FPD and the new Chalfant Valley Fire Department, which is a Community Services District, was formed in 1988. Both Benton and Chalfant are experiencing significant growth and there is a need throughout the Tri-Valley for expanded fire protection and emergency medical services.

At some point in the future, a regional Tri-Valley fire protection entity might best provide fire protection services for the area. Although a larger combined fire protection entity for the Tri-Valley could potentially reduce administrative costs, eliminate duplication of services in the Hammil Valley, and enjoy greater economies of scale than the smaller districts, past socio-economic distinctions have resulted in two distinct districts for the Tri-Valley. If these socio-economic distinctions change in the future, a regional Tri-Valley fire protection entity should be considered. At that time, a reorganization study should be conducted to determine what governmental structure would best provide services for the region. Such a reorganization should only occur with the concurrence of both districts' Boards of Directors.

V. REFERENCES

References Consulted

California State Department of Finance

Demographic Research Unit

Population and housing estimates and projections

California Governor's Office of Planning and Research

Cortese-Knox Act

Guidelines on Municipal Service Reviews

Mono County Community Development Department

911 Addressing Project, Mono County & Town of Mammoth Lakes. An Introductory Look at the Project, Including Needs, Goals, and Process.

Mono County, Division of Emergency Medical Services

Staff Report: Emergency Medical Services Workshop for the Tri-Valley. June 20, 2006.

Mono County Local Agency Formation Commission

White Mountain Fire Protection District Sphere of Influence Report, February 1987.

Mono County Planning Department

Mono County General Plan. 1993.

Mono County General Plan, Revised Land Use Element and Land Development Regulations. 2001.

Mono County Housing Element. 2004.

Mono County Master Environmental Assessment. 2001.

Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan for Mono County and Mammoth Lakes. 2006.

The Housing Collaborative LLC et.al.

Eastern Sierra Housing Needs Assessment. 2004.

Persons Consulted

White Mountain Fire Protection District

Cindy Kitt, Commissioner